




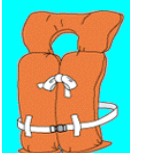



# BUYING A PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICE

**Handy  
Hints**  
with  
**Dennis Figg**

Don't assume that because you're a good swimmer, you don't need a PFD. If you're knocked unconscious or stranded in cold or swift water, it could save your life or the life of someone you love.

A properly fitting Type III PFD will fit snugly around your torso without inhibiting your mobility, and it will stay in place when you float in the water. Test the fit in the store by asking a friend to pull up on the vest. If it rides up near your chin or blocks your eyesight, it's either too big or not cinched properly. The vest must have enough sturdy closures (waist ties, zippers, plastic buckles) to keep it from riding up. Avoid uncoated metal. Move around to check your mobility and to see if your hands brush against any fasteners. Also make sure it fits over layers of clothing. In children's PFDs, look for flotation collars and leg straps that will keep a child from slipping out of the vest.

To prolong the life of your vest, never use it as a seat cushion, kneeling pad or backrest. And remember: like a seat belt in a car, a PFD doesn't work if you don't wear it.

COAST GUARD-APPROVED TYPES OF PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES		
Type I/Offshore Life Jacket		Geared for rough waters where rescue may take awhile...will turn unconscious person's face up in the water. This is the old navy "Mae West" life jacket and is often heavy, bulky and uncomfortable
Type II/Near-Shore Vest		Good for calm waters and fast rescues...may lack the capacity to turn wearers face-up. The "horse collar" kapok model that drapes uncomfortably around your neck should be avoided.
Type III/Flotation Aid		Good for calm waters and fast rescues...comes in vests and full-sleeved jackets. This is the preferred model for canoeing and fishing in Missouri. Unless you choose a model with an additional flotation collar, it will not turn you face-up in the water if you are unconscious
Type IV/Throwable Device		Cushions or ring buoys designed to be thrown to someone in trouble. It makes a handy backup rescue device, but should not be substituted for a Type III life vest.
Type V/Special Use Device		Includes windsurfing vests, deck suits, hybrid PFDs and others designed for specific activities such as water skiing or kayaking. Type V PFDs must be work when underway to be acceptable.

Graphics courtesy of Missouri State Water Patrol

## IT'S THE LAW

- All children under age 7 must wear a USCG-approved Type I, II, III, or V personal flotation device at all times while on board any boat, unless the child is confined in a totally enclosed area such as the cabin of a houseboat or day-cruiser
- For each person onboard or being towed, boats 16' in length or longer must carry a wearable USCG-approved PFD and boats less than 16' in length must carry one wearable or one throwable USCG-approved PFD
- Under federal law, a wearable PFD is required for each person onboard, regardless of boat length
- Each PFD must be in good & serviceable condition, be readily accessible, and of the proper size for the intended wearer. They may not be stowed in closed or locked compartments
- Each person riding on a personal water craft must wear a USCG-approved Type I, II, III or V PFD